A FRIENDLY

LETTER

TO THE

Flying Clergy,

WHEREIN

Is Humbly Requeſted and modeſtly Challenged the Cauſe of their FLIGHT.

By *J. W.* Prieſt.

ROM. 8. 7.

Let him that is a Miniſter wait on his Miniſtry, and he that Teacheth on Teaching.

LONDON,

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To the Reverend and Learned CLERGY, *who have left their Cures in this time of Calamity:*

SIRS,

WHat the ſad Effects of your Flight have been is too too evident to thoſe, who only unite to make a breach in the *Church*, never expreſſing ſuch mirth as when they ſee the *Church* in mourning; To theſe it hath afforded matter of *Contempt*, not only of your Perſons, but alſo of your Office: To others, who are the true *Sons* of the *Church* it hath been no ſmall cauſe of fear and doubting. I heartily wiſh you had ſtopt the mouths of the firſt, however I beg of you that you will ſatisfie the doubts of the ſecond, whoſe grief I have experienced to be ſuch, that none can heal them, but you that have given the wound: I have a long time expected what is here requeſted, but finding a fruſtration of my Hopes, and an increaſe of the peoples feares, I do by theſe in all humility requeſt you, and if that will not move, I challenge you faithfully to publiſh the cauſe of your flight, whether ſenſe of duty, or fear of danger; *If* you anſwer the firſt, then tell me what Text in the *Sacred* Page commands it: *Is this to abide in your Calling whereunto you were called? Is this to ſtand upon your Watch? Is this to gird our ſelves, lament and howle, &c.* as the Prophet *Joel* commands, *chap.* 1. *v.* 13, 14. *Is this to be ready to die for the Cauſe of Chriſt*, with *Saint Paul*; *Or to comfort the feeble-minded, and to ſupport the weak*, as he enjoines, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 14. No, no, it cannot be. 2. Which of the Fathers have either taught or practiſed it: *Is* not this contrary to the doctrine of the *Fathers* both ancient and modern, *St. Auſtin* comparing *Mat.*

10.23. with *Joh.* 10.12. concludes, that though in some cases Flight may be lawful, yet saith he, *Quando commune est periculum fugiendum non est, ne quisquam fugere credatur non consulendi voluntate, sed timore moriendi magisque fugiendi obsit exemplo quam vivendi prosit officio* epist. 180. In a common danger we ought not to flie, lest we seem to flie rather for feare of death, then love to live to the good of the Church, and so become more hurtful by our example in flying, then we can be profitable by our living. Nay, further, he tells us, 'If the Calamity be so great, that we 'must either all of us flie or die, that its then to be deter-'mined by lot, and we ought to take our lot: Semblable to this are those words of that learned and religious Prelat, once Bishop of *Exceter*, *Decad.* 4. *Epist.* 9. 'We, saith he, are 'not our own but our peoples, and are charged with all 'their souls, which to hazard by absence, is to lose our own: We must love our lives, but not when they are Rivals with our souls, or with others; Its better to be dead then to be negligent or faithless: All soules must not wilfully be neglected because some are contagiously sick: this is the time when good counsel is most seasonable and needful; now then, to run away from a necessary and publick good to avoid a doubtful and private evil, is to run into a worse evil then we would avoid. I will not trouble you any further, by instancing in the doctrines and practices of others of the Fathers; I know its needless: Only one more, and that is the practice of your spiritual Father, his Grace the Lord Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*, who ventures his person with us in this common calamity, whom God preserve in health and honour; Had you troad the steps of this holy Father, how might you have refreshed your

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afflicted flock, and ſtopt the mouths of all thoſe who watch for your halting. I have hinted the example and practice of this pious and learned Prelat, not that *I* judg it leſs unlawful for a Biſhop to remove his Seat, then for any of us to remove from one part of our pariſh to another, (which in truth is ſo far from being unlawful, that in ſome caſes *I* judge it our duty to do it) But *I* have thus inſtanced for the encouragement of my fellow-Labourers in the work of the Miniſtry, ſeeing he hath denied himſelf his own convenience for our comfort. The *Romans* that *Fled* with *Pompey*, termed their baniſhment better then their own Countrey, becauſe *Pompey* was with them: what encouragement then may it be to us that we have our *Father* with us. 2. To the ſhame of ſom of you that are *Fled*, notwithſtanding the large taſte you have had of his kindneſſe, in 2 *Kings* 19. 37. in ſtead of the word יָשְׁבוּ in the Original we finde the Vowels ſet in the Text without their Conſonants; To intimate, that for the Kings own ſons to lay violent hands upon their father in the Temple, at his devotion, though it was to a falſ god, was *ſcelus infandum* a wickedneſs too monſtrous to be expreſt; If theſe were not worthy to have their Names written in the Book of God, becauſe they had ſlain their father, who was a Worſhipper of a falſe god, then what is due to you to leave your *Father*, who even in this time of danger, not only by doctrine, but example, teacheth the Worſhip of the true God. 3. Pray tell me if it be your duty to *Fly*, who have *Curam Animarum* upon you; how then is it lawful for your *Curates* to ſtay, nay, is it not a ſin in you to requeſt other Miniſters to ſtay, if it be a Miniſters duty to *Flie*: Neither can you argue a double Cure; the ableſt *Patient* needs the beſt Phyſician, according to that of our Saviour, *They that*

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are whole need no Physician, but they that are sick; Now *I* take it for granted, that your abilities surpass those of your Curates, or else its pity you should enjoy such preferments; but it may be you will be more ingenuous and faithful, and confess that fear was the cause of your *Flight*; Consider
8. then 1. The sad doom of those who betray the truth out of fear: 2. How much better were it for men of your spirits, to content your selves with more private Benefices, whence your *Flight* at such a time as this might be less offensive and prejudicial to the publick; *If* the *Magistrates* and other Officers of this place had followed your footings, would not this in all probability have induced two greater Judgments, *Famine* and the *Sword*, which *I* fear is wished for by the *plague-Parents* of this place, *Sectaries* and *Rebels*; for so you finde them *Numb.* 16. 42. *&c.* *If* Magistrates had *Fled*, how should we have been protected? if inferiour Officers, how should the poor have been relieved? Further, besides that it conduces to the publick good, how much might a timely Resignation of your livings in this place, have conduced to the *Glory* of God, and quiet of your own Consciences; Though I believe you are fearful, yet *I* dare not think that you are so far void of affection, as not to be troubled at that poison which may be suckt in by your people, from the mouths of Sectaries, who have not only crept into your parishes, but also (as *I* am credibly informed) into some of your Pulpits: Thus Gentlemen *I* have writ to you with all plainness, in order to the satisfaction of the publick, and not out of vain ostentation, though *I* confess *I* glory in this, that God hath given me courage to execute my Office, notwithstanding the great mortalitie that is in this parish where *I* am an unworthy Mi-

nister,

niſter: I well hope you will either render an Apology, or return to your *Charge*, that ſo the mouths of thoſe Gainſayers may be ſtopt, (who, like *Nero*, would be glad to ſee the Church on fire, that they might warm themſelves at the flame) that the dubious may be ſatisfied, and the Truth may be Vindicated, which is the dailie and fervent prayer of your Brother and Servant,

Dated, *Sept.* 6.
1665.

J. W.

FINIS.